

Golf

Injury Prevention

(rotator cuff & shoulder)



Forearm & Rotator Cuff Exercises

Rotator cuff exercises can help to prevent common injuries that occur in racket sports and golf. Repetitive movements can damage the rotator cuff muscles, which are typically much weaker than the muscles of the chest, shoulder and upper back, which support the shoulder blades (scapula).

The problem is often compounded with strength training. As the athlete strengthens the major muscle groups the rotator cuffs become disproportionately weak. They are placed under increasing strain as they try to 'keep up' with stronger muscles surrounding them. Rotator cuff exercises can help to overcome this disproportion in muscle strength therefore helping to prevent overuse injuries.

Athletes who are prone to rotator cuff damage are also often prone to tennis elbow. For the same reasons, it's worthwhile to perform some forearm and wrist strengthening exercises to help prevent this other common overuse injury occurring.

Rotator Cuff Exercises

The rotator cuff exercises below use **light** hand weights. Keep to a weight of 2-5 lbs (1-2kg) maximum. Complete 3 sets of 12-15 repetitions for the following exercises in the order below.

External Rotation

1. Lie on side opposite of working arm.
2. Start position: Grasp dumbbell and flex elbow at 90° keeping elbow in at side.
3. Rotate arm outward keeping elbow at 90°.
4. Return to start position.
5. Remember to keep elbow firmly secured to side. You may put a rolled towel between the elbow and side to facilitate rotation and secure form.

Internal Rotation

1. Lie on same side of working arm.
2. Start position: Lying on a bench or bed grasp dumbbell and flex elbow at 90° keeping elbow in at side. Forearm should start slightly below parallel to floor.
3. Rotate arm upward keeping elbow at 90°.
4. Return to start position.
5. Remember to keep elbow firmly secured to side. You may put a rolled towel between the elbow and side to facilitate rotation and secure form.

Horizontal Rotation

1. Stand with your elbows at shoulder level and flexed at 90 degrees.
2. Hold a weight plate in each hand and externally rotate your hands up towards the ceiling.
3. Return to the starting position.

Wrist Exercises

You can perform the exercises below with either a set of dumbbells or a barbell. Again keep the weight relatively light (although not as light for rotator cuff exercises) and aim for 3 sets of 12-15 repetitions.

Reverse Wrist Curls

1. Sit in upright position and rest forearms on corresponding thighs with the palms facing down.
2. Hands and wrists should be off the thighs or table (as shown).
3. Raise the weight by extending at the wrist.
4. Lower the weight and repeat.
5. Remember to keep the forearms flat and supported on the thighs or bench throughout the movement. Trunk should be flexed forward at the hips - keep back straight throughout movement.

Wrist Curls

Repeat the exercise above in exactly the same way except start with the palms facing up rather than down. This will work a different part of the forearm muscles.

Wrist Rotation

1. For this exercise use a broom handle or similar sized bar. It should not be heavy like a barbell however.
2. Sitting down place one hand on your knee holding the end of the broom handle. Your forearm should be resting flat on your knee.
3. The broom handle should point directly up as though it is extending from your knee.
4. Keeping your forearm flat against your thigh rotate your wrist to the left and then to the right. The broom handle will rotate from pointing directly up to pointing directly out to the left and then to your right.
5. Complete 10 repetitions to each side and then change hands.

Use this wrist and rotator cuff exercises 3 days a week preferably not on consecutive days. You can perform them alongside a weight training program or even at the end of a strength training workout.

It goes without saying that if you suspect you have an injury and these exercises cause you any kind of pain you should seek the advice of a Physician or Physical Therapist. Rotator cuff exercises are an excellent preventative measure but they will only aggravate an existing injury.